United Nations A/AC.183/SR.313

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 January 2009

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 313th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 10 November 2008, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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08-59443 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

1. **The Chairman**, summarizing some of the activities that had taken place since the Committee's previous meeting, said that the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Condoleezza Rice, had visited the Middle East recently and met with the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tzipi Livni, in Jerusalem, as well as with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, in Ramallah.

2. On 9 November 2008, the Quartet principals had met in Sharm el-Sheikh and had invited President Abbas and Foreign Minister Livni to join them. Their meeting had focused on efforts to achieve lasting peace in the region, consistent with the Annapolis process and the shared goal of a two-State solution. On the same day reconciliation talks among Palestinian organizations had begun in Cairo.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

3. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that the meeting of the Committee was being held at a historic moment for the region, owing to the result of the recent elections in the United States of America, which would usher in a new Administration that had expressed the desire to deal with the situation of the Palestinian people soon after assuming office in January 2009, while elections would be held in Israel in February 2009. During the recent meeting of the Quartet, and also at the meeting with Secretary Rice in Ramallah, President Abbas had stated that the Palestinian Authority was wholly prepared and trusted that the political process and the negotiations would continue after the changes in the United States and Israel.

4. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had been very critical in recent months, owing to the continuation of the Israeli settlement-building policy and practice. Israel had not heeded the call of the Quartet that all settlement activities should cease immediately and that it should dismantle all outposts and remove many of the West Bank checkpoints which prevented the free movement of people and goods necessary for the economic life of the Occupied Territory. It was ironic that, in the year since the Annapolis Conference, the number of checkpoints had increased by over 15 per cent and settlement activities had intensified to the highest level in a long time, according to many Israeli organizations. Those activities, together with the seizure of the Gaza Strip in which 1.5 million Palestinians were living in conditions that resembled a prison camp, the failure of Israel to reopen Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, and the 11,000 Palestinians still held in Israeli prisons, were not conducive to advancing the peace process and giving people hope and encouragement.

5. Even though significant results could not be expected regarding the six final status issues: borders, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, water and security, during the period leading up to the change of Government in the United States and Israel, the time should not be wasted but used to persuade Israel to change its policy towards checkpoints, settlements and the Gaza Strip. If Israel was unresponsive, the situation would not be conducive to peace when the time came to continue the negotiations on final status issues, just as the current situation had not been conducive to concluding a peace treaty by the end of the year, as envisaged by the Annapolis process.

6. Further efforts were required by the Quartet, the international community and the participants in the Annapolis process to ensure fulfilment of the obligations with regard to the situation on the ground. The statement of Secretary Rice in Jenin attested to the fact that the Palestinian Authority had lived up to its obligations with regard to the road map, but Israel had not reciprocated with regard to the settlements and checkpoints. According to Israel, the checkpoints had been established for security reasons, but by the admission of Tony Blair, the Quartet Representative, Secretary Rice and some Israeli generals, the Palestine Authority had accomplished a great deal on the security front; thus, many of the checkpoints could be removed, which would show that the peace process was producing positive results. If the current Israeli Government was running on a peace platform, then it should change its practices in the period between the current time and the elections to show that it was truly committed to peace.

7. Egypt had recently met with all the Palestinian groups individually and had prepared a document that

was intended to provide a basis for national reconciliation. The document proposed the establishment of a national reconciliation body, to be approved by all political parties, which would be responsible for organizing presidential and parliamentary elections and negotiating the lifting of the Israeli imposed isolation of the Palestinian Authority and the blockade of the Gaza Strip. The national reconciliation Government would honour all commitments, obligations and agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel and the international community as a whole and would allow for immediate reunification of the two parts of the country and open the doors to the reform of the security forces in the Gaza Strip, with the help of other Arab countries.

8. Egypt had organized a meeting, to which it had invited the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of seven Arab countries, in order to discuss the proposals with all of Palestine's political groups. The meeting had been postponed owing to the withdrawal of key participants, which was very unfortunate as the reunification of Palestine was urgent, since the country needed to be ready internally for unfolding events in Washington with the new Administration and in Israel after the February elections.

9. Palestine expected its friends within and outside the Committee to become sponsors of and to support the draft resolutions on the question of Palestine. Their content was similar to the 2007 resolutions as there had been no significant changes on the ground over the past year that would warrant major amendments.

Consideration of draft resolutions on the question of Palestine

10. **The Chairman** drew attention to four draft resolutions entitled, respectively, "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", which were to be submitted to the General Assembly under agenda item 16, entitled "Question of Palestine". The draft resolutions had been discussed and approved by the Bureau, which recommended them for approval by the Committee. They were based on the resolutions adopted at the sixty-second session, but had been updated to reflect recent developments on the ground and international efforts towards the resumption of the peace process. A number of substantive, as well as editorial and technical changes had been made.

11. There had been no substantive changes in the two resolutions concerning the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. In the draft resolution on the Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, the tenth preambular paragraph had been amended so as to refer to the programme for 2009-2010. In paragraph 3 (a), the words "as well as on the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator vis-à-vis the peace process" had been added thus adding another subject on which the Department was requested to disseminate information, and in paragraph 3 (d) the words "and Israel" had been inserted after "the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" thus adding a location where the Department was requested to organize and promote fact-finding news missions for journalists.

12. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the draft resolutions on the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **The Chairman**, turning to the draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", said that in the sixteenth preambular paragraph the phrase "as well as on efforts aimed at rehabilitating and developing the damaged Palestinian economy, and on the territorial contiguity of the Territory" had been added at the end of the paragraph to indicate additional areas where the Israeli policy of closures and restriction of movement was having a negative impact. That paragraph 1 also incorporated the former seventeenth preambular paragraph by expressing concern about the continued establishment and entrenchment of Israeli checkpoints and the imposition of a permit regime. The twenty-second preambular paragraph, which had welcomed the convening of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians in 2007, had been updated to welcome the reconvening of that Committee in 2008. A new twenty-

sixth preambular paragraph took note of the ceasefire agreement reached in June 2008 for the Gaza Strip and southern Israel and called for its continued respect by both sides and for its immediate extension to the West Bank.

15. With regard to the operative part of the resolution, paragraph 3, welcoming the Arab Peace Initiative, had been updated to reaffirm that Initiative's importance and encourage continued serious efforts to follow up and promote it. New paragraph 4 incorporated the reference in former paragraph 7 to "confidence-building measures aimed at improving the situation on the ground, promoting stability, and fostering the peace process". Former paragraph 5 welcoming the efforts of the Quartet's Special Representative Tony Blair had become new paragraph 18. In the new paragraph 5, previously paragraph 8 calling on both parties to take parallel and reciprocal steps to implement their obligations under the road map, the word "immediate" had been inserted before "parallel". The second half of former paragraph 6, calling for the acceleration of direct peace negotiations, had become paragraph 16; paragraph 6 now ended with the words "28 September 2000". In paragraph 7 (formerly paragraph 9) the words "and other obstructions to movement" had been inserted after "removal of checkpoints". In paragraph 10 (formerly paragraph 13) the words "and demographic composition" had been inserted after "status".

16. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

17. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

18. **The Chairman** reminded delegations that the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 24 November 2008 and invited all members of the Committee and observers to be represented at the commemorative meeting to be held on that occasion, if possible at the ambassadorial level. He also urged all Committee members and observers to participate actively in the debate on agenda item 16, "Question of Palestine", in the plenary Assembly, and requested them to encourage non-members to do the same.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.